FRONTLINE

The Other Side of the Track

FRONTLINE #211

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INTRODUCTION

NARRATOR
Tonight on FRONTLINE, the horses, the jockeys, the players. All trying to win at a tough gamble.

ANDY BEYER
There's just no form of gambling that is so exciting as the race track. I'm already thinking a week or so ahead and I cannot reveal the name. . . that on Saturday in those betless races, I saw a horse that will make me King of the World.

NARRATOR
The private world inside a public passion. . . the other side of the track.

JUDY WOODRUFF
Good evening, I'm Judy Woodruff.

It's that time of year, the season for front runners and also-rans, for races coming down to the wire. But it may surprise you to learn that America's favorite spectator sport isn't election year politics, or baseball, or football--but horseracing. That's especially true now, with the Triple Crown upon us.

If you were one of the more than 30 million Americans who watched the Kentucky Derby on television, you saw the pomp and ceremony, the public image of racing. What you don't see is another side of the track, the private world of horseracing and horseplayers, a side of racing that's captured the imagination--and sometimes the suspicions--of a public always hungry for a winner.

The sport of kings is the passion of millions who would be kings at one of the oldest and toughest gambles in the world. Tonight, producer/reporter Irv Drasnin enters that other world of horseracing: "The Other Side of the Track."

IRV DRASNIN
There are few places that bring together so many Americans so often as this place.

There are few obsessions shared by so many Americans of different backgrounds and persuasions.

A $15 billion industry--and some 30 state treasuries--depend on their willingness to take a chance, to risk their judgement and their money in a venture many believe is at least slightly crooked.

What they're doing is thought by some to be frivolous, even reckless; by some as an addiction, even a disease--injurious, perhaps, to the health and morals of a nation.

And by others, like Andy Beyer, as life's greatest challenge.

ANDY BEYER
Gambling is certainly one of the great human activities, but there's just no form of gambling that is so exciting as the race track. It's not just putting money on the turn of the card or the roll of the dice, but you are investing so much of your intellect and your ego.

IRV DRASNIN
That won't be his only investment today, not by a long-shot, though long-shots are his passion.

Andy Beyer has an Ivy League education, a steady job and no debts. . . which might contradict your image of the horseplayer.

He's also invested thousands of hours, on mathematics and history. . . which might change your mind about this game.

Like the rest of us, whatever we do, he must know the difference between a mindless gamble and a calculated risk.

(TRUMPET CALL TO TRACK)

ANDY BEYER
Twenty dollar tri-key: eight over four, six, twelve...

TRACK ANNOUNCER
They're at the post.

ANDY BEYER
Ten dollar key: eight, slash, four, five, six, twelve. Fifteen dollar tri, part-wheel: four-twelve, slash, eight, slash, three, four, six, eight, twelve...

TRACK ANNOUNCER
They're in the gate.

ANDY BEYER
And 500 to win on the eight.

IRV DRASNIN
On this race, he's made 15 bets, costing almost a thousand dollars.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
They're off!

ANDY BEYER
There's a tremendous amount of nerve-wracking pressure when you're winning or losing thousands of dollars during the course of the day.

The feeling of getting beaten at the wire out of, say, a $120,000, which happened to me at Santa Anita last winter, or making great scores that you know might for some people be equivalent of several months of work on the job, is a very high pressure activity.

Come on Earlie. Come on eight, now, hold 'em off. Jesus Christ! Save the place you, son of a bitch!

IRV DRASNIN
When Beyer isn't following even a losing bet, he's covering the track as a columnist for the *Washington Post*. . . 20 years after skipping his last exam as an English major at Harvard, because he liked his chances on a horse named Ameroid more than he did on a poet named Chaucer.

ANDY BEYER
What makes racing so special and so challenging is that on top of all the intellectual difficulties that are involved, the game becomes such a tremendous test of character as well as intellect. Dealing with all of the psychological pressures and the emotions that accompany the rapid movement of large sums of money is very, very difficult. And if somebody has a chink in his emotional armor, this game will find it and exploit it. I mean, if your impatient, impulsive, if you have even the tiniest little instinct for self-destruction, I mean, this game will bring out all of your bad qualities.

IRV DRASNIN
For centuries, man's fortunes have been linked to the horse: in war, in peace, in Devil's Bag--syndicated as a two-year-old for $36 million.

Maybe that's why $360 million was spent last year on one-year-olds, and why athletes not much more than five feet tall and a hundred pounds can also end up in the money.

It pays, of course, to ride millionaires, like John Henry, who's won more money than any thoroughbred who's ever run. And sometimes, it pays to bet on them.

That helps explain why horseracing is America's number one spectator sport, with an attendance of 77 million people; why, against all the odds, they persist at one of the oldest tests known to man: assessing horse flesh.

That's what brought the Vanderbilts and Whitneys--and now the bankers and syndicates--to the races. At the track, breeding and bloodlines count for people as well as horses.

This side of racing is familiar: the sport of Kings, and Queens. If there's tradition and wealth, an elite of racing, it's here at Belmont Park in New York, the day of the Jockey Club Gold Cup.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
Here is the field for the 65th running of the Jockey Club Gold Cup. Number one: Slew o'Gold, trained by Sydney Waters, Jr., the rider, Angel Cordero, Jr.

IRV DRASNIN
But there's another side of the track, whether in the stands or beneath them at the TV monitors. On this side of the track--in less than two-and-a-half minutes--more than a million dollars will change hands on this one race.

It's a drama repeated over and over again, tens of thousands of times a year, every 25 minutes. That's how long you have between races, to get to the window.

When all the bets are punched into all the pari-mutuel machines at American tracks they add up to almost $12 billion a year.

At the track, as in life, about the only safe bet is taxes: state governments collect some $650 million off the top. That's why, for most of America, it's the only legal bet in town.

It may also be the most bewildering. It takes a computer to book these bets, and a linguist to understand them.

Even if you've heard of win, place and show, what about quinellas, and perfectas, and trifectas, that can be wheeled or boxed.

IRV DRASNIN (Continued)
Or the daily double: picking the winners of two consecutive races.

Whatever you do, it's one bettor's opinion against another's. That's what determines the odds. And on this day at Belmont Park, one man's opinion that stands out in the crowd is Andy Beyer's.

EMCEE INTRODUCING BEYER
Now as far as today's double goes, Andy Beyer likes this double that he's about to give you so much, that he was scared he'd be shut out and he bet it already. I saw him run to the window and bet; he says, "I gotta get this bet down." Here he is, the famous writer: Andy Beyer. (APPLAUSE)

ANDY BEYER
When you see a horse who has had everything his own way in a previous race, and has earned a reputation or run a race that really makes him look better than he is and now he's getting over-bet, you're supposed to take a shot against him. And I am going to do that with all I can muster in today's second race, because the odds-on favorite, Chopper Charlie--I hate this horse so much that they're going to have to drag me away from the window.

IRV DRASNIN
Beyer's eliminating a horse that won its last race by 20 lengths--a heavy favorite named Chopper Charlie--for a long-shot he says can't lose, Antigua.

ANDY BEYER
To me, I mean, Antigua is an absolute cinch in this race, and if one could get the morning line in this race of fifteen-to-one, I mean, it would be like going to heaven. I'll be happy to take three-to-one, and in terms of the daily double, I'm just going to try to get alive to Antigua. But the doubles that Harvey mentioned that I ran to the windows to play were one-three, and six-three, but if you were inclined to take any other horses in the first race, I wouldn't talk you out of it. But Antigua's the horse in the second race, and we'll throw Chopper Charlie all the way out.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
Humbug has the lead on the inside by only a half. Antigua on the outside moving into second, and Chopper Charlie between those two is third. Then it's Righteous Anger and we pass the eighth pole. Antigua on the outside now takes the lead. Humbug back into second. Then Righteous Anger on the outside is moving into third. It's Antigua, in front.

IRV DRASNIN
Beyer has given the crowd a winner, even if Antigua pays less than three-to-one. But his own daily double also depended on the outcome of the first race. . . and a horse named Swoon.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
And they're off. Away from the gate slowly was North Glade. They move past the stands for the first time. On the outside, Swoon takes the early lead by a length-and-a-half. Charging Through second by one. Tampa Town third, a length and three quarters. Then it's Dance Caller fourth a neck, moving up on the outside North Glade is fifth by two lengths. The field heads towards the clubhouse turn. Swoon enjoying a two length advantage.

IRV DRASNIN
Early in the race, it looks good for Swoon, the number six horse, and for Beyer. But in his heart, the horseplayer knows there's no such thing as a sure thing.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
They race toward the half-mile pole that way. And Swoon still leads one-and-a-half lengths. Charging Through is second by four. Tampa Town moves to third at this point.

IRV DRASNIN
As the horses enter the last turn, Swoon is challenged by a horse Beyer hasn't bet: the three horse, Charging Through.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
...around the far turn, there goes Charging Through, charging up now to take over the lead by one. Swoon is second by four lengths. Tampa Town is next in third.

ANDY BEYER
Come again, baby. Come on six.

IRV DRASNIN
If the horseplayer's fate is to suffer uncertainty and pain, the horseplayer's salvation is eternal hope--and a system. One way to look for a winner is through study, research, analysis. It's not the only way.

Horseplayer #1: I find I win more when I bet on a hunch.

Irv Drasnin: On a hunch?

Horseplayer #1: Yes.

Irv Drasnin: What kind of hunches do you play?

Horseplayer #1: Like when I get a dream.

Horseplayer #2: I usually go by the name.

Irv Drasnin: What kind of names do you like?

Horseplayer #2: Like my grandchildren's names, and my husband's name, anyone that I know.

Irv Drasnin: Do you have a system? Do you have a method?

Horseplayer #3: Yeah, I do.

Irv Drasnin: What is it?

Horseplayer #3: I can't tell you.

Horseplayer #4: Anybody that plays has gotta be out of their mind. I oughta know, cause I've been playing them for 50 years.

Irv Drasnin: Who do you like in the next race?

Horseplayer #4: Well according to the thing there, it's the one. I don't know his name.

Irv Drasnin: Is that who you're gonna bet?

Horseplayer #4: I was going to, yeah. Number one. See, because on the morning line he opened up at eight-to-five, right? That means that's one of my plays. If he opens up at two-to-one or three-to-one, I won't play him. But being that he's opened at eight-to-five, I'll play him.

IRV DRASNIN
The decision to "play him" may depend on intuition, insight, or the information printed in America's highest priced daily newspaper, the *Racing Form*.

At the track--on Sunday and every other racing day--the *Form* is known as the Bible. . . chapter and verse very much open to interpretation.

Not so, the tip sheets, that claim to give you the winners, sometimes two or three in each race.

Public touts sell their selections to a faithful yearning for something to believe in. And among the best sellers in New York is Connie Merjos, a clean-shaven horsepicker known as "The Beard."

Irv Drasnin: How long have you been doing this, Connie? How long have you been "The Beard?"

Connie Merjos: I've been the Beard nine years. I think it's nine years.

Irv Drasnin: What did you do before that?

Connie Merjos: I was a classical musician. I played the bassoon.

IRV DRASNIN
As a concert bassoonist, Connie Merjos played with Stravinsky and Stokowski, the Met and the Bolshoi. As "The Beard," he plays the horses.

First, he measures the distance from the starting gate to the track's electronic timer, to get a more accurate clocking of each race. Then, he measures the field.

Irv Drasnin: Connie, what are you looking for when you're looking at these horses on the track?

Connie Merjos: Well, for one thing you want to see if they come out nervous, if they come out wet, any change of equipment that they might have. Mostly bandages. Now you don't want a horse that has been running without bandages suddenly to come onto the track with bandages. Obviously something is not quite right.

Irv Drasnin: Have you ever looked at the horses before a race and suddenly decided that a horse you hadn't picked...

Connie Merjos: Looks exceptionally good?

Irv Drasnin: Yeah.

Connie Merjos: Yes. A big move-up, in other words, in appearance. And conversely, I've seen horses that I picked that I wouldn't put a penny on because they look terrible on the track.

Irv Drasnin: You're keeping track of this for every horse in every race?

Connie Merjos: Every horse, every race, every day.

Irv Drasnin: Who do you like in this race?

Connie Merjos: I like the three horse, and the one that I'm worried about is the twelve. To me, it boils down to a two horse race.

Irv Drasnin: We'll see how you do.

IRV DRASNIN
What's important here isn't just how the Beard does, but what he does, how he watches a horse race.

IRV DRASNIN (Continued)
There are speed handicappers, who use time and track conditions to define a horse's ability.

There are "trip" handicappers, who note where each horse is during a race--whether its racing luck is good or bad.

The Beard is doing both.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
They're at the top of the stretch. Three quarters, ten and four. Donna's World on the outside moves out in front.

IRV DRASNIN
It would be unfair to judge the Beard on any one race, but he had reason to worry about the number 12 horse, Donna's World.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
They pass the eighth pole. Donna's World on the outside continues to lead by a half. On the inside, Impressive Gift is second by eight, then French Tab, Eastern Sun and Little Ol' Catapane. Donna's World, in front.

IRV DRASNIN
Donna's World beat the favorite, but the Beard wasn't through yet on this day of New York's heaviest recorded rainfall for the date.

"The wetter the better," the Beard said, for the number eight horse in the last race, Free Saint.

As the horses turned for home, there was neither sight nor sound of Free Saint until, halfway through the stretch, on the outside, one horse emerged from the mist.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
Pretty Pretense still has the lead. Gaining ground on the outside to challenge is Free Saint. Free Saint takes the lead. Pretty Pretense in second. Free Saint, in front.

Irv Drasnin: If the Beard can do it, why can't we?

Connie Merjos: Are you willing to put in 18 hours a day doing what we do? You have a shot then?

Irv Drasnin: Otherwise?

Connie Merjos: No, no. The average person cannot beat this game. It requires too much work.

IRV DRASNIN
Too much work may not fit your idea of the horseplayer's life. Consider then, this loft in New York's Greenwich Village.

These scholars of racing labor ten to twelve hours a day absorbed in the smallest detail, preparing reports for a select clientele that will wager as much as a million dollars a week.

What's being produced here is a private tip sheet that reduces to one number the hundreds of factors used to rate a horse's performance; for every horse, in every race, every day, in five states. Interperting that number is up to you.

This isn't the image of touts and gamblers made popular by Damon Runyon in his stories about the sporting life of an earlier American era, about dreamers like Harry the Horse, and Hot Horse Herbie.

But if he were writing today, Runyon might include Rags and the sheets. . . though Len Ragozin is Harvard '49, an economist, and a realist.

LEN RAGOZIN
I speak as a mathematician. When something is 99.999999 improbable, you speak of it as being impossible. But that doesn't mean that there isn't that little point one at the end there. There are a few people who beat horses. Very, very few.

You come to me and you say you're raving about a horse, and, how fast does he run? Well, he runs a mile in a minute and 35 seconds. That's not an answer. It doesn't mean anything. Anybody who's knowledgeable would then ask you, "Which track did he do it on? One turn or two turns? How much weight did he carry? Which way was the wind blowing? Well, did it rain? Was the track composition hard or soft? Did they plow it up that morning? Did he run around on the rail and save ground, did he run around on the outside? Did a bird hit him between the eyes as he ran down the stretch?" All right.

All these variables have been weighted out so that my figure is telling you how fast the horse would have run if all the races were on astroturf with a domed stadium and no weather, you know. That's what we're giving.

IRV DRASNIN
What Ragozin gets for his sheets is $20 a day plus a percentage of what's bet by his customers, who include horse owners and trainers, a psychologist, a tax consultant and professional gamblers.

He no longer goes to the track, and despite his warnings, Ragozin believes you can beat the races, if you go by his numbers.

LEN RAGOZIN
The biggest winner that I ever had on my sheets was a professor who blew in here one year and blew out about two years later with a quarter of a million dollars in his pocket. And he didn't know anything about horse racing. He didn't buy the *Racing Form*. He didn't. He came in here. He was dating someone that worked in my office. He said "This looks pretty easy. All the work seems to be done on these figures." And we're all laughing behind his back, "Wait 'til he tries it," you know. Well.

Irv Drasnin: Is this what you set out to do in life? Was this your goal?

Len Ragozin: This was a very strange right turn which was precipitated by an earlier left turn. I was working for Newsweek magazine in lowly positions and the McCarthy era came around, and I was a Red, and I basically became an unemployable. To give them--I don't want to smear them.

They didn't fire me. But it was evident that I wasn't going anywhere. And I didn't know McCarthy was a flash in the pan. I figured it was gonna be like that all my life, I better find a way of making a living where people can't fire me. And that's when I took this turn. I never went to a horse race until after I had graduated college. I knew nothing about racing. I had no intention of doing it. My ambition always was to write orchestral music based on American folk themes.

(RAGOZIN SINGS "STEWBALL")

IRV DRASNIN
This is a 19th century folk song--about gamblers, and a horse of another color.

(CONCLUSION OF "STEWBALL")

In the folklore of racing, Ol' Stewball was painted red so that insiders could hide his true identity and cash a big bet.

Such stories also are part of the history of racing: drugged horses, bribed jockeys, fixed races. Inevitably, they raise questions about the honesty of the game.

Every horseplayer has an answer, including Andy Beyer.

Irv Drasnin: How is this game played? How honest is it?

Andy Beyer: I think it's pretty honest. But here, let's say there's enough larceny that it is a factor that an honest man has to reckon with and deal with.

Irv Drasnin: But you've written about your experience at a small track, Great Barrington. What happened to you there?

Andy Beyer: I'm always skeptical of tales of extreme larceny in racing but I went up to Barrington 'cause I like cheap race tracks with rock bottom horses, and there I saw what had to be the most scandalous races I've ever seen.

I mean Barrington is kind of an extreme case. Even a former steward there told me that they should post a sign at their gate that says "Beware all ye who enter here."

FAIR ANNOUNCER
Good afternoon everyone, this is Al Vestro welcoming you to the eighth day of the Great Barrington Fair, the longest consecutive running and annual fair in the United States.

IRV DRASNIN
The slogan used at the fair in Great Barrington, Massachusetts is: "The Belmont of the Berkshires." It's only a slogan.

The beauty of racing also exists at the fair, at the first light of morning on the backstretch.

These, too, are thoroughbreds, but not the champion three or four-year-olds of the major tracks. Often, these are ailing 13 or 14-year-olds who've run as many as a hundred races, or more.

Few pay their own way. Many will soon be sent to the packing house, 35 cents a pound.

If some of these horses are broken down, so are conditions on the backstretch. This side of the track can be a dangerous place for both beast and man, as almost any trainer will tell you.

Trainer: It's kind of a rough game, I tell you. Kind of a tough game.

Irv Drasnin: How is it a rough game?

Trainer: Oh, you know, there's good horses and there's bad horses, and it's kind of hard to bet.

Irv Drasnin: Is that the only reason it's hard to bet?

Trainer: Oh, there's a few others, but we can't mention them right now.

Irv Drasnin: Do you ever have any idea, ahead of a race that you're in, that you either are or are not going to win that race?

Woman Trainer: Yes, we do.

IRV DRASNIN
At first, these trainers also were reluctant to talk for the record. Then, they decided, they weren't coming back to Barrington anyway. . . for more reasons than one.

Second Trainer: And I also stay in front of my stalls all night long the night before my horses run. Because we've already had one that someone got to him.

Irv Drasnin: What do you mean, "somebody got to him"?

Second Trainer: Somebody put a stop to him here at the barn before the races.

Irv Drasnin: How do you do that?

Second Trainer: With a syringe. And, you know, whatever they use. I don't know. And his neck is still draining from it, and we've had four different vets in, and all that verified, it was from a dirty needle. So someone did get to the horse.

IRV DRASNIN
At the fair, there's no trumpet call to the track, and no guarantee of what might happen when the starting gate opens.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
Horse ambulance, please go to the starting gate immediately. The regular ambulance, to the starting gate, immediately. Men, there's a rider down near the far turn. A rider is down in the far turn.

IRV DRASNIN
It's not always easy riding at the fair, or getting to the steward's tower to claim a foul.

Even when the race is over, the result may be in doubt--more often, it seems, at the fair.

Jockey: Around this turn here, he almost dropped Richard and I both.

Steward: Last time around the turn?

Jockey: Yes sir.

Steward: That's the one we ran back.

Jockey: Yes sir.

Steward: We'll run it back again. OK, Mary Jo.

Jockey: Oh man, we had to check our horses to stop them from running. He's coming...

Steward: Where's the other jockey?

Jockey: Well, he didn't even hit the board.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please. There has been a claim of foul lodged by the rider of number seven against the rider of the unofficial winner of the first race for possible interference on the turn for home.

CLOCKER DAN
Hey, Clocker Dan. Winners!

IRV DRASNIN
Listening to the tout, it seems all too easy. He trades on the innocence and illusion that go back to racing's beginnings. Damon Runyon would have known Clocker Dan and Maryland George.

MARYLAND GEORGE
Thank you sir. Hey, another good card today. Winners. Hey, George got another one today. Here we got winners. Hey, longshot winners here with George. Thank you sir.

CLOCKER DAN
Hey, Clocker Dan's winners.

IRV DRASNIN
At Belmont or at Barrington, what every horseplayer wants is what other horseplayers might not have: an edge, a tip, inside information.

MARYLAND GEORGE
Hey, we got winners. I'll give you something good there. Come here. Bet the three specials today. And bet that hundred dollar double today. Slip me ten and you'll do all right. (LAUGHS) Slip me that dollar and you'll win the double. Thank you sir. Hey, Lucky George got the double again. Hey, we got winners. Daily double with George.

BETTOR
Who do you like, anyone?

IRV DRASNIN
And at Barrington, tips are found almost anywhere, even at a betting window.

BETTOR
That was close, boy. Couldn't be any closer. So what do you think. Any more tips? This one? I mean--one-four? In this race? Hit it.

IRV DRASNIN
Another way to bet here isn't by looking at the horses but at the tote board, where late and rapid changes in the odds can tell you where the smart money is.

We were tipped to the number eight horse. Five minutes before the race, it was four-to-one.

Then, three-to-one...

Five-to-one...

Two-to-one...

By the time the eight horse--Rambunctious Again--neared the starting gate, he was even-money. That pays four dollars on a two-dollar bet.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
They're in the stretch for the finish. McNeely on the inside. Rambunctious Again on the outside. Those two are stride for stride. They are heads apart.

IRV DRASNIN
But it was the perfecta pay-off, $30.20 for picking the first two horses, that made it such a good bet.

Horseplayers line up to bet perfecta races because they pay bigger prices. For that reason, too, they also tempt someone wanting to fix a race.

If you know that certain horses won't finish in the money, especially favorites, you can bet combinations on all the other horses in the race. And, especially if they include a long-shot, you can collect a big pay-off.

At Barrington, there were several perfecta races each day, and at least one of those races hadn't gone unnoticed by trainers on the backstretch.

Irv Drasnin: Does anything ever happen in races here that make you suspicious?

Trainer: Yeah. It has to be by the way that the betting is done. It isn't all the public that is doing that. Like that other day when they had that perfecta. That horse paid $49 to win and the perfecta only paid 43. That's ridiculous.

Irv Drasnin: What does that tell you?

Trainer: It tells me that someone bigger than we are is betting a lot of money. Whether it's, uh...

Irv Drasnin: And controlling the races?

Trainer: Someone's controlling them. Someone's trying to control them.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
And they're off.

IRV DRASNIN
One problem for anyone trying to fix a race is the pay-off. If enough money is bet on any combination of horses, it will distort the odds, drive down the price, and arouse suspicion.

Someone drove down the price at Great Barrington on September 21, 1983, in this race.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
They come off the turn for the first time. The leader is Stone Balance.

Slim Summers: I remember the race because I was a steward at the time, and there was a very strange betting pattern. But we in the stands could not see anything wrong with the race. We reviewed the films, and reviewed the films, and it just looked everything was above board.

Irv Drasnin: That race was looked into, was investigated?

Slim Summers: Oh yes, yes. Whenever, there's an unusual betting pattern, uh, then that's when we start investigating.

Irv Drasnin: And you would call that unusual?

Slim Summers: Oh yeah.

IRV DRASNIN
Herman "Slim" Summers should know. He's worked at race tracks more than 40 years. And he was in charge of racing at Great Barrington.

Irv Drasnin: When you see an unusual betting pattern, if there is some kind of manipulation of a horse race, who is doing it, who is profiting by it?

Slim Summers: Evidently a person or persons that are heavy gamblers, trying to create a coup.

JAMES MOSELEY
Do I think they were fixed? Yes I do think they were fixed. Why didn't I do something about it? Yes, we did do something about it, but we didn't have the time to put together the facts to be able to apprehend those individuals involved.

IRV DRASNIN
James Moseley was a member of the Massachusetts Racing Commission at the time. He also remembers that perfecta race, and has come to his own conclusions about it.

JAMES MOSELEY
In my opinion, it certainly--it's conceivable that it wasn't fixed. Let me put it that way. So, in other words, yes, I think it probably was. I think there was some hanky-panky that went on.

Irv Drasnin: I mean, have you ever had a horse run and lose that you thought should have won the race?

Trainer: Oh yeah. Lots of times. You can't come right out and accuse the jockey of holding the horse, 'cause it's hard to tell about that.

Irv Drasnin: But you sure hear a lot of those stories around here.

Trainer: Yeah, you do.

Irv Drasnin: What I hear you saying between the lines is that somebody, sometimes at least, knows something about how these races are going to end up.

Trainer: I'd say that most of these gimmick races are all, uh, that's the ones they try to do it. Try to fix--guaranteed they do. And it's not only this track. Not only here. It's probably other tracks too that they, uh, you know, you got two horses, and usually if you can get the right horse in second, you can get a better price as a perfecta, than if you bet the horse outright to win, you know?

TRACK ANNOUNCER
They're on the last turn. Stone Balance has it by five lengths.

IRV DRASNIN
About all that's known for sure about this race at Great Barrington is that the winning horse paid $49 but the pay-off for the first two horses was only $43. . . and that it should have been much more.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
Stone Balance in front.

JOE POMARICO
Based on our parlay system, that horse, that exacta, with the 49 dollar horse on top, should have paid approximately $200, or better. With a 43-dollar pay-off, you know some big money went down on that exacta. Maybe possibly thousands of dollars were won on that particular exacta. We'd like to know about that.

IRV DRASNIN
In New York, betting patterns on perfecta races--also called exactas--are being closely watched for what here is called a "bad pay-off."

In this basement office at Belmont Park, Detective Joe Pomarico is charting the bets being made on a perfecta race.

If he sees anything unusual, he says he's got to suspect that someone is trying to fix a race. It's happened before at big tracks, where there's big money.

Irv Drasnin: Are there some big bettors out here?

Joe Pomarico: Oh definitely.

Irv Drasnin: What's a big bet?

Joe Pomarico: Two thousand dollars a race, fifteen hundred, five thousand dollars. I'd say you have professional gamblers, they may go for ten thousand a day with no problem.

IRV DRASNIN
The New York Racing Association now spends $11 million a year just to police its tracks. It wasn't always that way.

The Association's internal security force now includes an investigative unit run by former New York City detectives, who weren't brought in until after a race-fixing scandal during the 1970s.

N.Y.R.A. DETECTIVE
We've looked at the matter, we've investigated ourselves, we've interviewed over a hundred people, right here in this office. True, it's after the fact. In fact, perhaps several years after the fact. But I don't feel it was as widespread. People have this image of illegal racing running rampant during that period. It wasn't quite that. There were a number of selected races that we feel at this point were fixed, but it wasn't as rampant as people might think.

IRV DRASNIN
It's important what people think--especially legislators, and horseplayers--but there's more than reputations and credibility at stake here.

Every racing day in New York, the money is counted and weighed. If even one bill is missing, it will show up on this scale.

Every racing day, millions of dollars move in and out of the track's money room, in and out of the pockets of horseplayers--enough of whom think the game's honest enough to keep coming back to the races.

ANDY BEYER
I'm the happiest person I know. Every day, when I pick the *Racing Form* off my front stoop, and sit down with it, my life is full of excitement and challenge, and as long as I can do that and am ambulatory enough to get to the betting windows, I'm going to be happy. There are just so many people who go through their lives without a fraction of the kind of excitement and challenge that I get every day. I can't imagine doing anything else.

IRV DRASNIN
There are times when Andy Beyer does nothing else, as at the start of a new racing season in Florida.

It's one of his major betting efforts of the year. We went along for the ride, which, with a horseplayer's memory, he knows can be a roller-coaster.

Andy Beyer: I mean, I had one period at Saratoga a couple years ago, where like the first ten days of the meeting I lost $22,000 and I sat down with the Racing Forms for that period and, you know, what's going on? And I came to the conclusion I was doing everything right. This was just one of those random chains of events that... (LAUGHS)

Irv Drasnin: How did you end up at that meet where you were losing?

Andy Beyer: I won 20,000. I made an admirable comeback.

TRACK ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen, Hialeah Park is proud to present the flight of the flamingoes.

IRV DRASNIN
There is more to horseracing than just money: an aura, a spectacle, a magnetism that draws the crowd not only to the betting window, but to the rail.

There's the risk in controlling 1000-pound animals specially bred for hundreds of years; bred for speed and stamina but also for courage.

There's the setting, of bucolic splendor.

There's the heart-pounding uncertainty, the glory of the race, to the finish.

And, there's the money. Not as money alone but as the vindication of a horseplayer's judgement.

And there's the test of character, a man trying to control fate, and himself, taking chances he's calculated can beat the odds...

ANDY BEYER
Come on, four! Come on with this four!

IRV DRASNIN
...knowing that to beat the game, he not only has to pick the right horse, but make the right bet.

Irv Drasnin: Was there a lesson to be learned in that race?

Andy Beyer: I'm not sure if there was a lesson. I mean I. . . In a perverse sense I was pleased by the result, because the horse that I liked lost and I won 900 bucks. You can't win them all, if you're looking for a profound lesson. But if when you're wrong you can anticipate the ways in which you're likely to be wrong, and still at least save your ass or even make a profit, as in this case, you know I'm really pleased. I'm going to hit the home run ball a certain amount of the time and I don't expect to do it all the time. A profitable result. I breathe a sigh of relief at this result.

IRV DRASNIN
Beyer's a working man, remember. He must write and send his column to the *Washington Post*. He never misses a deadline. . . or a race.

For him, this too is work. And so far, he's earned almost $10,000 in less than a week at the races. He's going for $50,000, in as many days.

IRV DRASNIN (Continued)
You don't have to understand what he's saying to understand what he's doing. Even when his track record was on the losing side, he never stopped gambling, never stopped believing that this time, this race--based on what he'd learned, and a little luck--he'd be a winner.

And to win, he knows he must manage his money, and his emotions.

ANDY BEYER
Come on with this four. Come on Cannessa. Once in your life. Come on. Nine. Come on four. Nine-four-one! Get 'em up you son--Oh Jesus!

There are just going to be plenty of times when your best plans will go astray. This game is complex enough that nobody's going to be right all the time. You're not even going to be right 50 percent of the time.

IRV DRASNIN
Which is perhaps as much as anyone can hope for, which is enough to win if you know how to play the odds. To do that, Beyer must be willing to stand by his convictions, and, when necessary, to go against the crowd, looking for a winner, knowing there will be days like this.

Irv Drasnin: If you had to write about this day, what would you say?

Andy Beyer: Uh, it's just another testament to the glorious uncertainty of the turf, as someone called it. I mean, this is just another day, and it happened to be a losing day, in which there were, you know, there are a lot of bad things that can happen in this game, that you have no control over, and a lot of them happened today. I will not lose sleep tonight over this day's events. I mean, these were just ten more races in the long continuum of my gambling life, and neither I nor any gambler can afford to get too upset by relatively minor reversals like this.

Irv Drasnin: How minor was this reversal today?

Andy Beyer: Two thousand, four hundred, seventy-two dollars.

IRV DRASNIN
There's a popular saying at the track: you can beat a race but you can't beat the races.

That won't stop millions from trying, from lining up at the betting windows each new racing day--no matter what the odds.

Like Andy Beyer, they will suffer reversals. Unlike Beyer, the great majority will discover that gambling doesn't pay.

IRV DRASNIN (Continued)
At the end of the day, like this horseplayer, most will still be looking for a winner, even among the thousands of losing tickets that litter the floor of the grandstand.

But it's possible that something besides money, or weakness, brings them back for more, something in the human spirit: a need to look ahead, to go on, to the next race.

Irv Drasnin: What do you like for tomorrow?

Andy Beyer: Well, there are ten tomorrows, and unfortunately it isn't too glorious a card, but I'm already thinking a week or so ahead, and I cannot reveal this name, but on Saturday, in those betless races, I saw a horse that will make me King of the World.

UPDATE

JUDY WOODRUFF
Andy Beyer went to Florida this winter hoping to win at least $50,000. He won't say exactly how he did, but he says he wasn't disappointed.

However, you won't find Beyer at the Great Barrington Fair this September. The Massachusetts Racing Commission has yet to decide if there will be racing at Great Barrington this year.

As for the horse Beyer said would make him "King of the World," it lost its next race. But neither Beyer--nor apparently the horse--gives up easily. A few days later, the horse did win, helping Beyer to his biggest winning day this year. Now, he's looking ahead to this summer, and the races at Saratoga.

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